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New York

President:	Mr. Aguilar Zinser	(Mexico)
Members:	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Mbayu
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Guinea	Mr. Fall
	Ireland	Mr. Ryan
	Mauritius	Mr. Latona
	Norway	Mr. Kolby
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Singapore	Ms. Lee
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Wehbe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Eldon
	United States of America	Mr. Negroponte

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan.

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02-24347 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

The President *(spoke in Spanish)*: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Brahimi to take a seat at the Council table.

I welcome the presence of the Secretary-General and invite him to take the floor.

The Secretary-General: I am very happy to join the Security Council today. I have come to share some thoughts about my recent visit to Asia. If you agree, Sir, Mr. Brahimi will then provide a more detailed briefing on the situation on the ground in Afghanistan.

My trip took me to Japan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Qatar. In Japan, I met with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and attended the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan. In Pakistan, I met with President Musharraf and Foreign Minister Sattar and attended the Pakistan Forum On Human Development. In Afghanistan, I met with Chairman Karzai and members of the Interim Administration, as well as with representatives of civil society and women's group, and received a briefing from General McColl of the International Security Assistance Force. In Iran, I met with Ayatollah Khamenei, the Supreme Leader, as well as with President Khatami, Foreign Minister Kharrazi and the Speaker of the Parliament. Finally, I met with the Emir of Qatar.

With respect to Afghanistan, as I said, we will get more information from Mr. Brahimi, but the situation there was, of course, the main focus of my discussions throughout the region. I was greatly encouraged in Tokyo by the donations that were pledged — $4.5 billion for five years — and expressed strong support for the political process emanating from Bonn. Chairman Karzai stressed his firm commitment to transparency and accountability in the use of all aid and made clear his understanding that the role of the international community is to help the Afghans help themselves. I see that Mrs. Ogata, who chaired the meeting, is here with us this morning.

At the same time, as we analyse the pledges, we can see some critical gaps. The conference focused on long-term needs, but the Afghan Interim Administration needs money today, for example, to pay the salaries of public servants. Indeed, help is desperately needed right now. The international community must rise to the challenge today and then stay engaged for the long haul.

Security was the number one preoccupation of everyone we met in Afghanistan. Indeed, the security situation remains precarious and, without security, reconstruction will not be possible and donors will not be able to disburse the money they have so generously pledged.

The second main concern was the need for the Interim Administration to have the resources to pay public servants. Without resources, the Administration will quickly lose credibility and will be unable to extend its authority elsewhere in the country, thereby undermining the chances of success for the longer-term peace process.

Mr. Brahimi will brief the Council in greater detail about each of these issues.

One key element in Afghanistan's recovery will be the support of its neighbours. President Musharraf, for his part, was firm in his commitment to working with the Interim Administration and the United Nations. He invited Chairman Karzai and other members of the Interim Administration to visit Pakistan, and I conveyed that message to the Afghan authorities. President Musharraf also promised to take action against any Taliban or Al Qaeda personnel found in Pakistan and to ensure that Pakistani territory would not be used by Afghans interested in subverting the central Administration in Kabul. The President also made it clear that a stable Afghanistan was in Pakistan's national interest and that of the wider region.

Iran, too, is committed to strengthening the authority of the Interim Administration. Iran, which

like Pakistan has hosted many refugees for many years and has long had trade and other contacts with Afghanistan, also recognizes the national interest in a stable Afghanistan. The Iranian authorities also said they would not tolerate the presence of Taliban or Al Qaeda personnel on its territory.

Both Iran and Pakistan pledged to work with each other and with Afghanistan's other neighbours as we move ahead. Such a regional approach holds great promise, and I intend it to be a major pillar of United Nations strategy in confronting this challenge.

I also had a chance to talk in Islamabad with President Musharraf about relations between India and Pakistan. The President was very concerned about the military build-up and expressed his readiness for dialogue. He also reiterated his commitment, made in his courageous speech of 12 January, to take strong measures against extremist armed groups.

For my part, I stressed the need not only for immediate military de-escalation, but also for a sustained and determined dialogue aimed at resolving this situation, so that there will not be another crisis in a few weeks' or a few months' time. Towards that end, I renewed my offer of good offices, should both parties wish to avail themselves of them.

Another subject of great concern in Iran and Qatar, and in my talks with Secretary Powell on the margins of the Tokyo conference, was the downward spiral of violence between Israelis and Palestinians. We need to find a way to get the parties back to the negotiating table, where all issues should be addressed — terrorism as well as the occupation. Without this wider political context, and without some alleviation of the humanitarian plight of the Palestinians, I fear that progress will be nearly impossible and the risk of further violence all too great.

Mr. Larsen briefed the Council last week on this issue, and I will continue to do my utmost in helping to find new ways to break what is clearly a very dangerous impasse.

In conclusion, I know that everyone is looking forward to hearing from Lakhdar Brahimi, and I want to end here. He and his team have done remarkable work. Indeed, everywhere I went on this visit, United Nations staff were a constant source of inspiration. Despite extremely arduous conditions, their commitment is steadfast, and the breadth of their work is truly breathtaking. They are playing a key role in helping the people of Afghanistan to seize this unique moment of opportunity, and they merit our continued support.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Council, I thank the Secretary-General for the information he has provided us about his trip to Asia and his conversations with leaders in the region.

I now call on Mr. Brahimi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan.

Mr. Brahimi: It is an honour, Sir, to come back to brief the Council, and a privilege and a pleasure to take the floor under your presidency. May I express to you and to the new members of the Council my very best wishes for the two years they are going to serve this body.

Since the transfer of power in Afghanistan on 22 December, the Interim Administration, under the leadership of Hamid Karzai, has been working to establish itself as the central Government in Afghanistan. Obviously, it has encountered many obstacles, including the absence of trained personnel, the destruction of ministry premises, and the lack of equipment, including telephones and the other basic necessities that any administration requires in order to function properly.

However, progress has been made, and most ministries are starting to carry out their responsibilities. One of the most important achievements of the Administration was the payment of civil service salaries as of 22 January, that is, for the very first month of the Administration's existence. This went a long way towards enhancing the Administration's credibility.

The contributions made to the Afghan Interim Authority Fund, administered by the United Nations Development Programme, were instrumental in enabling the Administration to pay salaries on time. We are very grateful to all of the Governments that have paid into the Fund, but a much larger sum of money will be required in order to ensure that the Interim Administration can continue to pay salaries in the coming months and provide the bare minimum that peoples everywhere routinely expect of their Government.

The Tokyo conference, as the Secretary-General just said, was extremely well attended at a high level,

and the pledges made were substantial. The commitment that was shown by the international community was encouraging, but I cannot overemphasize the need for the pledges to be followed up, on an urgent basis, by actual contributions. The Interim Administration can count only on the generosity of the international community to help it find the means with which to begin the reconstruction of the country as soon as possible. Everyone understands how important it is to avoid a situation in which a large quantity of funds are said to be available in future, but very little is actually in hand for the urgent work that needs to be done now.

As the Secretary-General has just stated, security is, indeed, the main preoccupation of the population in Afghanistan. Flashpoints still exist throughout the country, and tensions flare up periodically, instilling fear in the population that peace will not last. Meanwhile, in other parts of the country, the situation remains calm.

Last week, tensions erupted both in the east and in the north. In Mazar-e-Sharif, two of the main factions moved troops into the city, and there were indications that a serious military conflict could take place. On 1 February, a joint mediation effort by the Interim Administration and the United Nations led to the renewal of a demilitarization agreement, in which unauthorized bases and posts were redeployed outside the city and security was placed in the hands of a joint police force. This was a significant development, although there are still unconfirmed reports of armed clashes outside the city.

The conflict in Gardez, in the east, has not been settled yet, although the military clashes ceased on 2 February. There are indications that the forces of one of the factions are currently deployed outside the town, with heavy weapons, and are threatening to attack again.

These clashes demonstrate that the peace in Afghanistan is still fragile. At the same time, the visible presence of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops in the capital has led to an improvement in the security situation in Kabul. This has led to increasingly vocal demands by ordinary Afghans, as well as by members of the Interim Administration and even warlords, for the expansion of ISAF to the rest of the country. We tend to agree with these demands, and we hope that these will receive favourable and urgent consideration by the Security Council.

In the medium and long term, however, it is the creation of a truly national police and army that will be critical to improving and stabilizing the security situation in Afghanistan.

A very useful meeting took place in the margins of the Tokyo conference precisely to discuss international support for the reform of the security sector. With regard to the police, the Afghan authorities have asked the German Government for training and assistance, and we strongly supported that request. As a result, a German delegation visited Kabul last month and made a preliminary assessment of the needs. A meeting is now scheduled to take place in Berlin on 13 February to discuss the specific needs of the Afghan police and the ways in which different Governments can assist. In the meantime, the United Kingdom has agreed to provide, through ISAF, £190,000 for communications and other basic equipment to the police in Kabul for their most immediate needs.

The creation of a national army is also a priority, and the international community will be called upon to provide assistance in terms of training, salaries, and so forth. For now, ISAF has undertaken to train a national guard battalion of 600 soldiers, beginning on 26 February — a most welcome initiative, which will, I am sure, show that helping Afghanistan to form a national army can be done. I also hope that the international community will pay attention to the need to help all those who participated in Afghanistan's many wars over the past quarter of a century to return to civilian life in dignity. In Afghanistan, as in most post-conflict situations, helping in the reintegration of former combatants is an essential part of the peace process.

I would like to emphasize the fact that the population of Afghanistan has very high expectations that the Interim Administration will bring about swift and significant improvements in the security situation. The Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Defence have urged that international assistance to the police and army, respectively, be forthcoming as soon as possible, and I share the view that we cannot afford to react slowly on this issue; time really is of the essence.

The United Nations relief activities also illustrate the disparate security situation in various parts of the

country. Relief efforts continue to gather momentum, and access to several areas that were only recently considered to be unsafe is improving. During the month of January, for example, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organization were able to distribute 6,000 tons of food in Kandahar alone. Relief workers have also gained access to several districts in Konar and Laghman provinces and to the road between Jalalabad and Kabul, enabling international staff to travel from Peshawar to Kabul by road. A city-wide distribution effort began in Mazar-e-Sharif yesterday — the third such distribution this year, after those in Herat and Kabul.

Work on a more systematic assessment of needs is also gearing up. Rapid assessments of internally displaced persons and of communities likely to be a focus for return are ongoing and, in some cases, nearing completion. This week, the World Food Programme is deploying six helicopters to launch rapid assessment missions in areas that are difficult to access by road, in particular to investigate reports of food shortages and even of famine — as some members may have seen on television — in remote areas in central west Afghanistan.

Despite encouraging developments, insecurity is continuing to hamper relief efforts in many parts of the country. Three entire provinces in the east — Paktia, Khost and Paktika — remain practically off-limits for humanitarian workers. The same applies to numerous districts in south-western Afghanistan, where several main roads remain extremely dangerous. The only remaining access road from Kabul to Bamiyan, for example, has been blocked by tensions in the area of Ghorbund.

Additionally, the tensions in Mazar-e-Sharif almost led to the evacuation of United Nations staff last week, while the situation in Gardez actually did force the evacuation of United Nations local staff, who have not yet been able to return. Even in areas that are considered relatively safe, such as Herat and Kabul, the security environment for relief workers remains quite fragile.

Insecurity is also continuing to have a serious impact on population movements, both as a cause for further displacement and as a major disincentive for the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. Insecurity will become even more relevant and worrying when large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons will want to return to their homes in March and April for the planting season.

Many of the returnees who have come back to the country — a total of some 105,000 people in January — have been moving to urban areas that they consider safe, in particular to Kabul and Herat, instead of going to their areas of origin, thus putting even more pressure on the very meagre service capacities of those cities. At the same time, Afghans seeking refuge in Pakistan are still arriving at the Chaman border crossing. Reports of discrimination against Pashtun minorities in the north and the continued presence of arms in some concentrations of internally displaced persons are of great concern to all of us.

The Bonn Agreement provided for the formation of a Special Independent Commission for the Convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga within one month after the transfer of power. This was one of the main preoccupations of the Interim Administration and the United Nations during January. The composition of the Commission was announced by Chairman Karzai in the presence of the Secretary-General during his visit to Kabul on 25 January. All 21 members have accepted membership in the Commission, and the group began its work on 29 January. The Commission is meeting every day, and it will be inaugurated officially by Chairman Karzai tomorrow.

The Commission has confirmed its intention to hold the emergency Loya Jirga within the five-month time frame set forth in the Bonn Agreement and to consult widely within the country in order to ensure that the Loya Jirga is representative of all segments of the Afghan population. A very strong effort was made to ensure that the members of the Loya Jirga were as independent as possible, and the composition of the Commission has generally been well received by the people of Afghanistan.

At the same time, the United Nations assisted in putting together a proposal for the re-establishment of a Civil Service Commission, including the preparation of a list of possible candidates to serve on it. That proposal is now with the Interim Administration, which is expected to act on it shortly and make the Civil Service Commission a reality.

With the establishment of the Loya Jirga Commission within the time frame mandated by Bonn, and with the Civil Service Commission on its way, two of the critical milestones in the peace process have

been successfully met. We now intend to focus our efforts on assisting the Interim Administration in the formation of the other two Commissions provided for in Bonn — the Judicial Commission and the Human Rights Commission.

I should now like to say a few words about the structure of the United Nations mission. This is, of course, one of our major preoccupations, because we need to finalize the structure of the future mission in Afghanistan as soon as possible. There have been long debates on this issue within the Integrated Mission Task Force and the United Nations Development Group/Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs here in New York as well as among the various agencies in the field. We are now close to a consensus on the structure. It will be an integrated mission that will operate with a "light footprint", keeping the international United Nations presence to the minimum required, while our Afghan colleagues are given as much of a role as possible. My discussions both in Kabul and in New York indicate that there is agreement within the United Nations on this approach.

Mr. Nigel Fisher, who has been appointed by the Secretary-General as Deputy Special Representative for Humanitarian Affairs in Afghanistan, will play an important role in bringing together the various parts of the United Nations system engaged in relief, reconstruction and recovery work and in ensuring that we work in tandem with the vision and objectives of the Interim Administration.

In the near future, the Secretary-General will also appoint another Deputy Special Representative to replace Mr. Vendrell, who has retired after a long and distinguished career at the United Nations and participated with distinction and dedication in the Organization's ongoing effort to help the people of Afghanistan out of their long and difficult crisis.

It seems that Bonn took place a very long time ago, but in fact it did not. The agreement was reached only on 5 December, exactly two months ago. The Interim Administration is settling in, and Chairman Karzai has become a familiar figure all over the world. Yet this Administration was inaugurated only on 22 December, a mere six or seven weeks ago.

Afghanistan has gone some way on the road towards peace and stability, but that road is still very long and fraught with danger. The Afghan people are tired — indeed, exhausted — because of the conflicts that have destroyed their country and threatened the very existence of their nation. They want peace, and they know that they still need the support of their friends and neighbours as well as the support of the international community as a whole. Even the most modest among them know that in mobilizing and channelling that help, the United Nations has a central role to play.

The Secretary-General was able to see and hear some of these expectations in the discussions he had in Kabul with Chairman Karzai and his colleagues, as well as in his talks with civil society and during his visit to a school for girls. I think that he also saw them as soon as he landed at Kabul airport, where he was met by a team of deminers, those heroic workers who are trying to cleanse their land of the most painful reminder of the terrible wars that Afghanistan has endured.

Our hope, and that of the people of Afghanistan, is that the international community in general and the United Nations in particular will stand by the people of Afghanistan, as the Secretary-General said, for the long haul.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Brahimi for the information he has provided. As President, I recognize the immense effort that the complex circumstances in Afghanistan have required of him in his capacity as Special Representative of the Secretary-General. I congratulate him, the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan and the Secretary-General on their work.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I should now like to invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.